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IMPROVEMENT

IN

Rural School Houses and Grounds

1900-1906

BY

R. D. W. CONNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

"THE PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO THE PRIVILEGE OF EDUCATION, AND IT IS THE DUTY OF THE STATE TO GUARD AND MAINTAIN THAT RIGHT."—*Bill of Rights in Constitution of North Carolina.*

RALEIGH:

OFFICE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

1907

"The public free schools are the colleges of the people; they are the nurseries of freedom; their establishment and efficiency are the paramount duty of a republic. The education of children is the most legitimate object of taxation."—*J. L. M. Curry.*

"Ignorance is either a good thing for a community or it is a bad thing. The means with which to banish ignorance can be voted into a community or they can be voted out. A good school-house, a good teacher, and a good library are the deadliest foes ignorance has. They can be voted into any community in North Carolina."—*Charles L. Coon.*

"The taxation that goes for the upbuilding of the public schools is the very freedom and liberty of the people."—*Charles B. Aycock.*

"It has been too common a political doctrine that the best government is that which levies the smallest taxes. The future will modify that doctrine and teach that liberal taxation, fairly levied and properly applied, is the chief mark of a civilized people. The savage pays no tax."—*Charles D. McIver.*

IMPROVEMENT

IN

RURAL SCHOOL HOUSES AND GROUNDS

1900-1906

"A GOOD SCHOOL-HOUSE IN A DISTRICT BEGETS A SPIRIT OF SELF-RELIANCE THAT WILL HAVE AN ELEVATING INFLUENCE ON INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL LIFE."—*Joseph E. Robinson, Chairman of the Board of Education of Wayne County, N. C.*

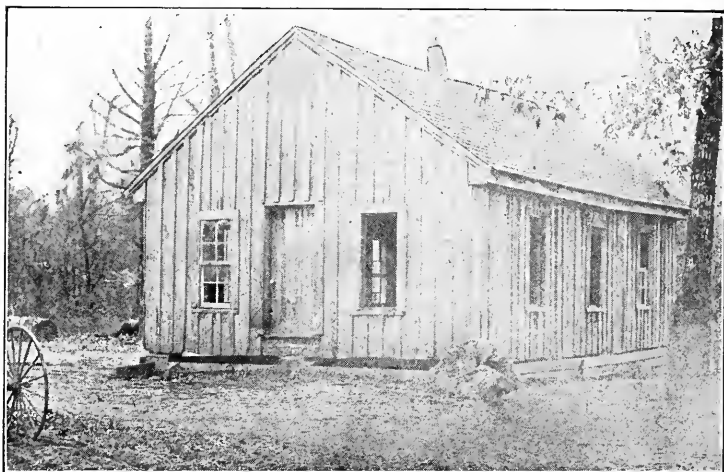
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SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION OF *(NORTH CAROLINA)*
RALEIGH.

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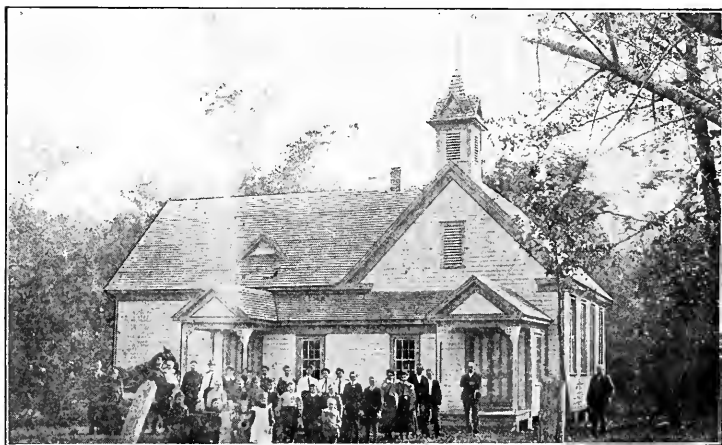
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ALLIANCE, PAMLICO COUNTY (OLD).



ALLIANCE, PAMLICO COUNTY (NEW).

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IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOL-HOUSES AND GROUNDS.

THE CHARACTER OF THE SCHOOL-HOUSE.

Since 1900 no phase of educational activity has received greater attention, or made more progress, in North Carolina than the physical equipment of public schools. State Superintendent J. Y. Joyner struck the keynote of the problem when he wrote in his report to the Governor in 1902:

"At the very foundation of every successful school system lies the practical problem of necessary physical equipment in houses, furniture, and grounds. * * * This question of the character of our public school houses is a far more serious one than many people think. Nobody has any respect for anything that is not respectable. A respectable school-house, then, is not only necessary for conducting successfully the business of public education, but is absolutely essential for commanding the respect of the community for that business. The character of the business must to some extent determine the character of the place of business.

"What, then, should be the character of these public school houses where the business of educating nine out of ten of the State's children for citizenship and social service is carried on? * * * Within, shall it be a hovel or a home, a place of beauty or a place of ugliness, a place of comfort or a place of discomfort, a place of cleanness or a place of uncleanness? Without, shall the grass grow green, and the sun shine bright, and the flowers bloom, and the birds sing, and the trees wave their long arms, or shall it be bleak and barren, where Nature, God's great teacher, never whispers to the children her sweet messages of peace and love and beauty from the Master?"



KITTRELL, VANCE COUNTY (OLD).



KITTRELL, VANCE COUNTY (NEW).

PUBLIC SCHOOL PROPERTY IN 1900.

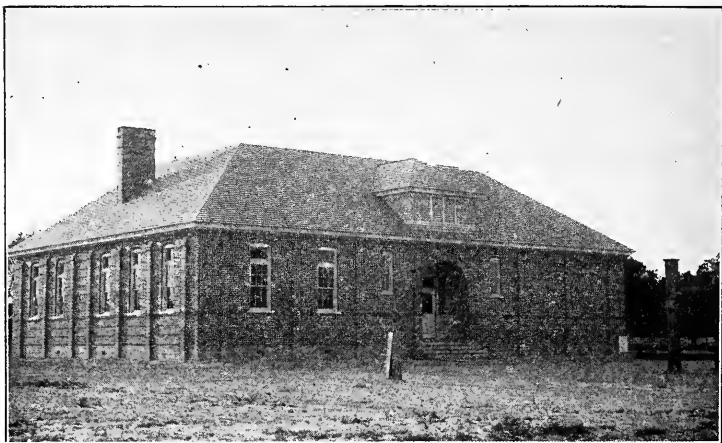
The following table will give some idea of the condition of public school property in North Carolina in 1900:

Rural school property for white race.....	\$ 850,250
Average per school.....	170
Rural school property for negro race.....	265,000
Average per school.....	120
Rural school property for the State.....	1,115,250
Average per school.....	157
City school property for white race.....	485,000
Average per school.....	12,125
City school property for negro race.....	95,000
Average per school.....	3,392
City school property for the State.....	580,000
Average per school.....	8,529

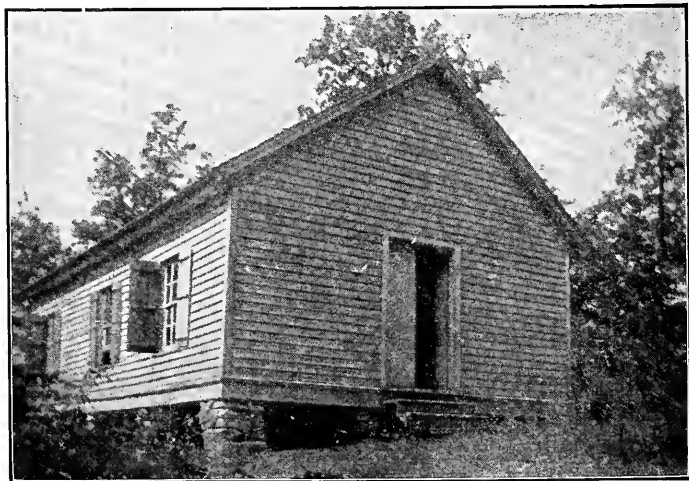
PUBLIC SCHOOL PROPERTY IN 1906.

The following table shows the conditions six years later:

Rural school property for white race.....	\$1,610,095
Average per school.....	319
Rural school property for negro race.....	299,859
Average per school.....	136
Rural school property for the State.....	1,909,954
Average per school.....	261
City school property for white race.....	1,589,500
Average per school.....	13,029
City school property for negro race.....	225,600
Average per school.....	3,177
City school property for the State.....	1,815,100
Average per school.....	9,404



ROPER PUBLIC SCHOOL, WASHINGTON COUNTY.



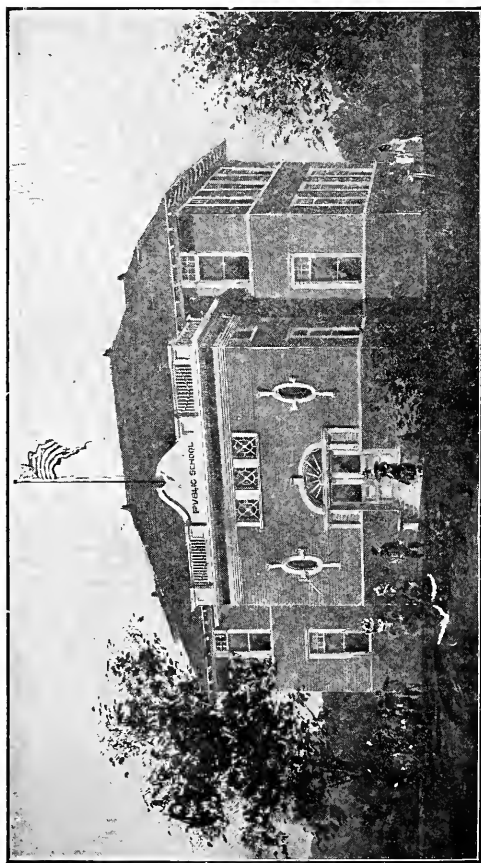
PLEASANT HILL, HENDERSON COUNTY (OLD).

SIX YEARS' PROGRESS.

From the above tables it will be seen that during the past six years the value of the rural school property for the white race has been increased by \$759,845, an increase of 89.3 per cent. The rural school property for the negro race within the same time has been increased \$34,859, which is an increase of 13.1 per cent. The total increase in the rural school property of the State has been, therefore, \$794,704, an increase of 71.2 per cent.

The showing for the cities of the State is even better than this; in fact, it is nothing short of revolutionary. During the past six years the increase in the value of city school property for the white race has been \$1,104,500, an increase of 227.7 per cent. The increase in the city school property for the negro race during this period has been \$130,600, or 137.4 per cent. The total city school property has increased, therefore, \$1,235,100, an increase of 212.9 per cent.

In 1900 the total valuation of the school property for the white race, both rural and city, was \$1,335,250; in 1906 this property was valued at \$3,199,595. This shows an increase of \$1,864,345, or 139.5 per cent. In 1900 the total valuation of the school property for the negro race, both rural and city, was \$360,000; in 1906 this property was valued at \$525,459, thus showing an increase of \$165,459, or 45.9 per cent. The total value of the public school property of the State, for both races, rural and city, in 1900 was \$1,695,250; in 1906 it was \$3,725,054, showing an increase of \$2,029,804, or 119.7 per cent. The amount of interest which these figures indicate in educational progress in the State can be better appreciated when it is recalled that while the value of the school property increased during this period 119.7 per cent., the assessed valuation of the taxable property in the State increased only 54.1 per cent.



PLEASANT HILL, HENDERSON COUNTY (NEW).

WHAT THESE FIGURES MEAN.

But what do those figures mean? Read alone, they are but dead facts. They show interest, indeed, in school-house improvement, but without interpretation they do not reveal the great revolution that they stand for in hundreds of backwoods districts. Interpreted, they mean—

That hundreds of dilapidated hovels—types of a past era—have succumbed to the spirit of progress and disappeared before the advent of the modern school-house;

That exteriors, the ugliness of which was hurtful to the eyes, have been brightened with new coats of paint;

That rough benches without backs or rests for the arms have given place to comfortable desks;

That blackboards, maps, charts and other equipment have been many times multiplied;

That floors have been scrubbed, stoves polished, walls cleaned, windows washed, shades and curtains hung;

That pictures of great men and events, reproductions of great masterpieces, have been hung by the thousands;

That sixteen hundred libraries containing 150,000 volumes of the world's choicest classics have been placed within reach of 145,000 children;

That stumps have been dug up by the thousands, trees trimmed, playgrounds laid off, and hundreds of school grounds brightened and beautified with flowers and grass of the children's own planting;

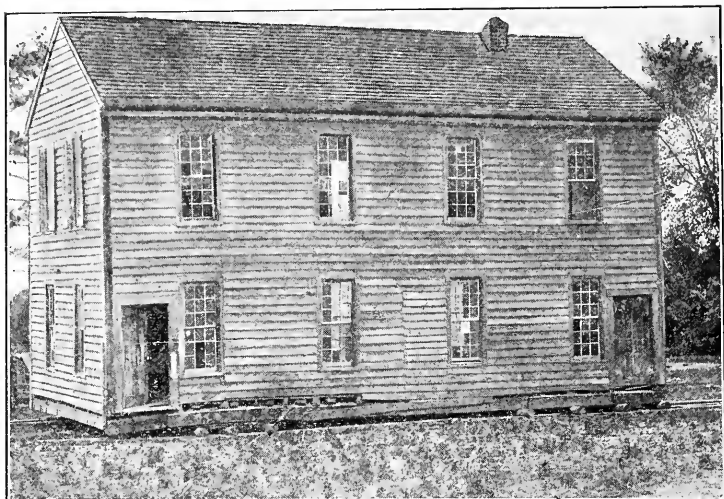
That teachers and pupils have been encouraged and stimulated to a new and better life in their school homes;

That communities hitherto hostile or indifferent to public education have been aroused to interest in the community's school and the community's children;

That personal whims and fancies have been subordinated to the general welfare and personal advantages surrendered for the general good;

That, finally, local prejudices and neighborhood quarrels have withered away in the face of a general pride in the people's schools, and have died well-merited deaths.

And all of this together means that in many a rural school district where now the grass grows green, the sun shines bright, the flowers bloom, the birds sing, and the trees wave their long arms, Nature, God's great teacher, comes to whisper to the children her sweet messages of peace and love and beauty from the Master.



SNOW HILL, GREENE COUNTY (OLD).



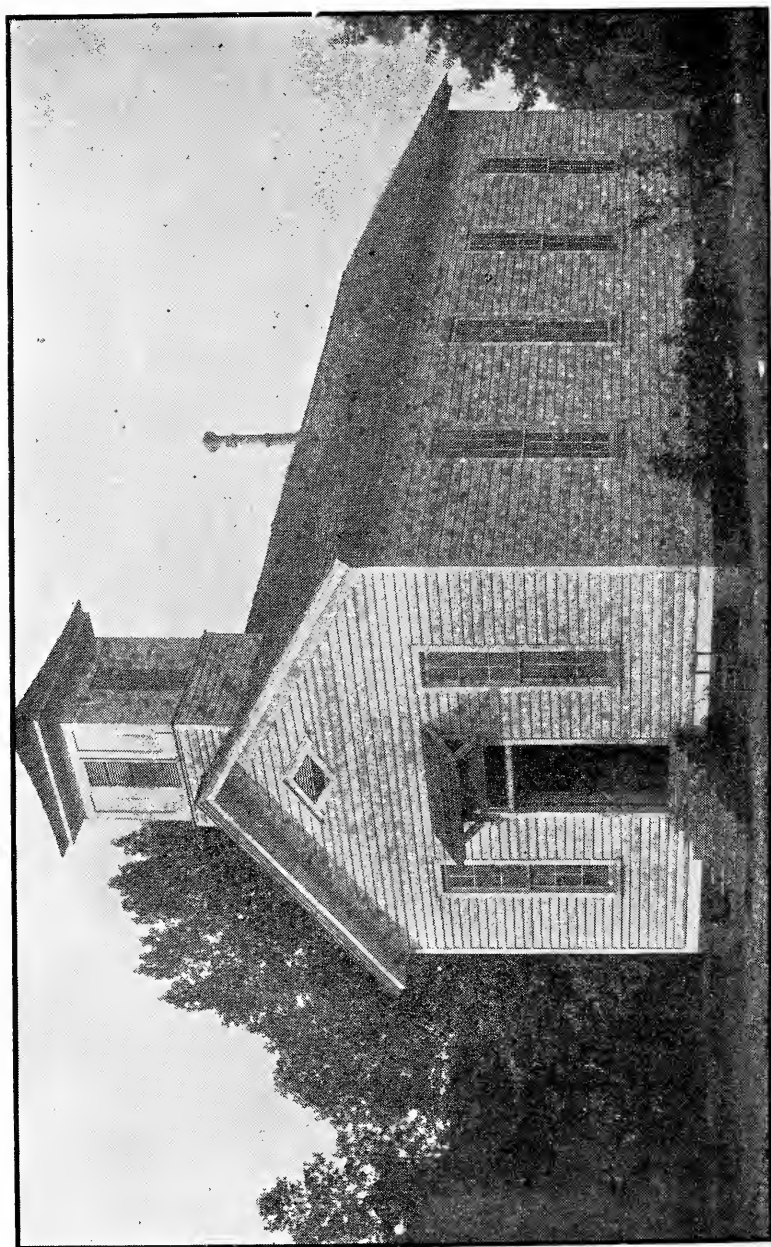
SNOW HILL, GREENE COUNTY (NEW).

THE LOAN FUND FOR BUILDING SCHOOL-HOUSES.

One of the most important factors in this development has been the "Loan Fund" for building and improving school-houses. This plan is unique and has been so successful that a full explanation is here given.

In 1902 the State Board of Education had to its credit \$194,159.18 derived from the sale of public lands. The annual interest on this fund, amounting to some \$2,000, was distributed per capita to the counties for school purposes. Such a method of distribution was little less than a waste of the fund, since the amount was too small to be permanently felt in increasing or improving school facilities. Accordingly, upon the recommendation of Superintendent Joyner, the General Assembly of 1903 set aside this entire fund, together with all other funds that may hereafter be derived from the sale of public lands, as a permanent loan fund to be used by the State Board of Education, under such rules and regulations as the Board may adopt, for building and improving public school houses.

"Under the provisions of the act, these loans are made by the State Board of Education to the County Board of Education, payable in ten annual instalments, bearing interest at four per cent., evidenced by the note of the County Board of Education, signed by the Chairman and Secretary thereof, and deposited with the State Treasurer. The loans to the school districts are made by the County Board of Education. The County Board of Education is directed to set apart out of the school funds at the January meeting a sufficient amount to pay the annual instalment and interest falling due on the succeeding tenth day of February. The payment of these loans to the State Board of Education is secured by making the loan a lien upon the total school funds of the county, in whatsoever hands such funds may be, and by further authorizing the State Treasurer, if necessary, to deduct a sufficient amount for the payment of any annual instalment due by any county out of any fund due any county from any special State appropriation for public schools, and by also authorizing him to bring action against the County Board of Education, the tax collector, or any person or persons in whose possession may be any part of the school fund of the county. The loan made by the County Board of Education to any district is secured by authorizing the County Board of Education to deduct the amount of



POMONA PUBLIC SCHOOL, GUILFORD COUNTY (OLD).

the annual instalment and interest due by such district from the apportionment to that district unless the district provides in some other way for its payment. The act, therefore, absolutely secures from loss both the State Board of Education and the County Board of Education."

Under the rules adopted by the State Board of Education, only one-half of the cost of new school-houses and grounds or of the improvement of old school-houses is lent to any county for any district. No loan is made to any district with less than sixty-five children of school age unless satisfactory evidence is furnished that such district is absolutely necessary on account of the sparsity of population or the existence of insurmountable natural barriers. Preference is given—

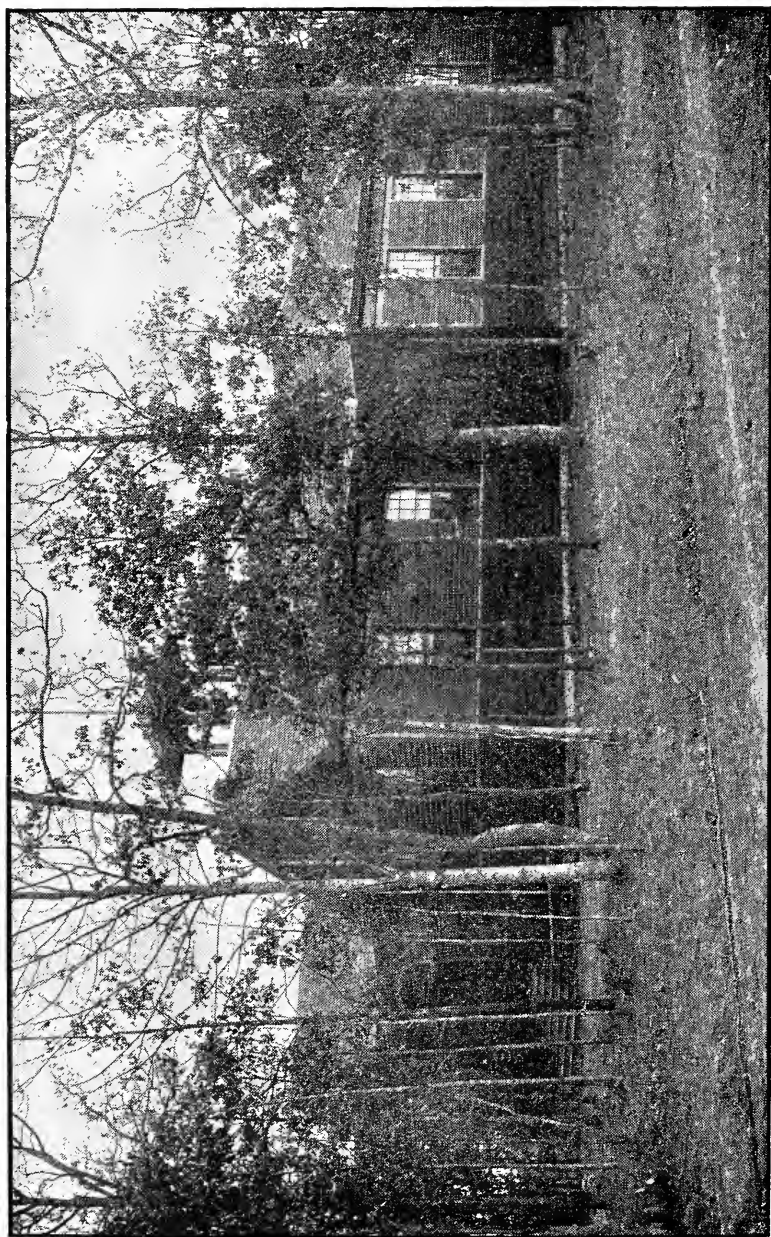
a. To rural districts or towns of less than a thousand inhabitants where the needs are greatest.

b. To rural districts or towns of less than one thousand inhabitants supporting their schools by local taxation.

c. To districts helping themselves by private subscription.

d. To large districts formed by consolidation of small districts.

All public school houses in North Carolina are required to be constructed strictly in accordance with plans approved by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. No loans are made for any house which does not comply with this requirement, nor to any rural district or small town for any house costing less than \$250.



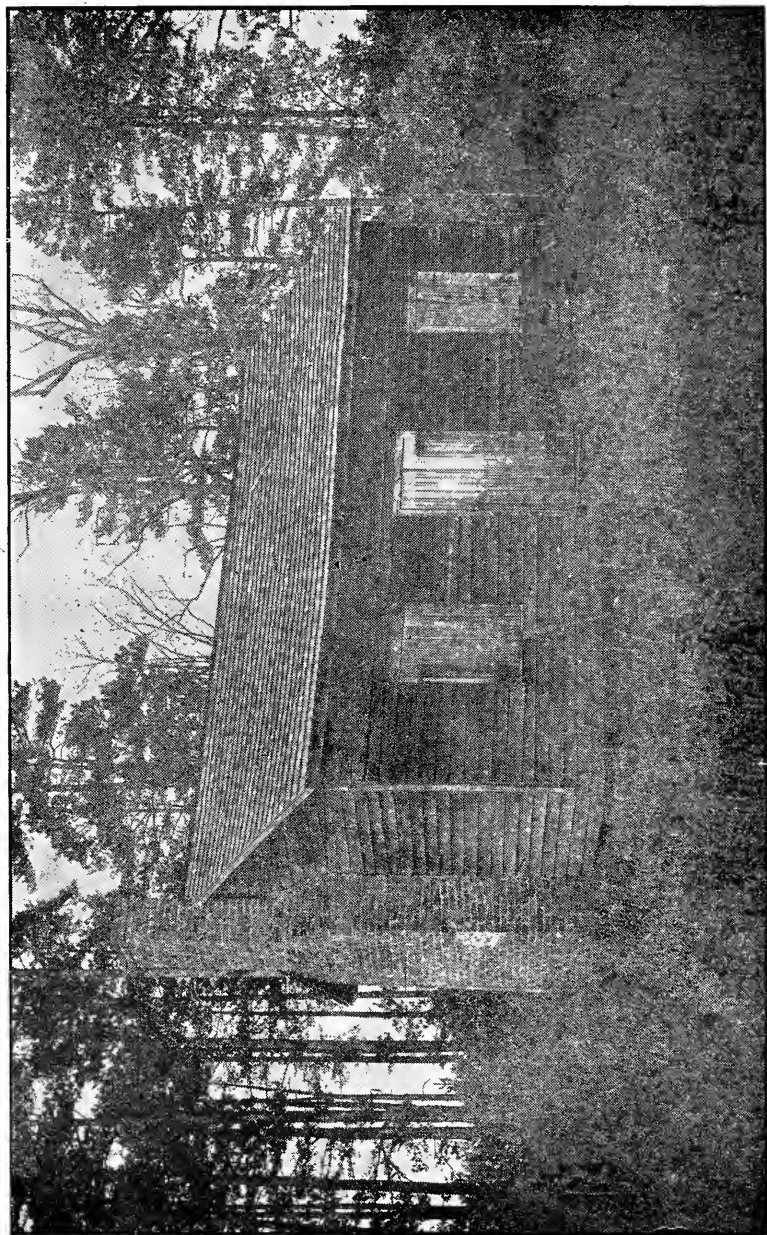
POMONA PUBLIC SCHOOL, GUILFORD COUNTY (NEW).

HOW THE LOAN FUND HAS BEEN USED.

The following table will show how this loan fund has been used :

Total amount loaned to counties	\$270,826
Number of counties to which loans have been made	81
(There are 97 counties in the State.)	
Number of districts that have been aided	635
Number of children in those districts.....	87,902
Number of new houses built with this aid.....	612
Value of these new houses	662,429
Value of the old houses that were displaced.....	72,416
Number of districts aided which had no houses...	301
Number of districts aided having houses worth less than \$50	184

The above table shows that by lending to the counties \$270,826 the State has secured school property valued at \$662,429, or nearly two and one-half times as much as the amount loaned. School-houses valued at \$72,416 have been replaced by houses valued at more than nine times that sum, giving the benefits of good, comfortable and properly built houses to 87,902 children. In 612 of the 635 districts to which loans have been made new houses have been erected, nearly half of which, 301, had no house at all, and 184 of which had huts valued at less than \$50. Each year adds to the ability of the "Loan Fund" to do good, since it increases by four per cent. annually, and this interest, together with one-tenth of the amount loaned, becomes available every year for building purposes. The fund now amounts to \$317,113, having grown to this amount since 1903 from \$194,159.18. It should also be said that though four annual instalments with interest have fallen due, every cent has been promptly paid by the counties.



GROOME, GUILFORD COUNTY (OLD).

WOMAN'S ASSOCIATION FOR THE BETTERMENT OF PUBLIC SCHOOL HOUSES.

A second important factor of this school-house improvement is the Woman's Association for the Betterment of Public School Houses in North Carolina. This association was organized in the spring of 1902. Its membership is limited, as its name implies, to women, and any public-spirited woman in North Carolina is eligible for membership.

The organization is three-fold: (1) The State Association; (2) The County Associations; (3) The District Associations. When the last reports were received associations had been formed in fifty-four of the ninety-seven counties and in nearly two hundred rural public school districts.

The purposes of the association are: (1) To interest the patrons of the public schools in the condition of the houses in which their children spend so much of their time; (2) to make the school-house the center of the social life in the community in which it is located; (3) to make the school-house the model of cleanliness and beauty for each home therein represented; (4) to cultivate in the children of the State a love for the beautiful.

The work of the association is best shown in the results as seen in a few of the typical counties in which it has worked. Through the influence of the association *during its first year*—

In Caldwell County eight schools obtained libraries;

In Cleveland County \$150 was raised by private subscription for improvements, 12 schools obtained libraries and 12 school-houses were improved, increasing in value from \$1,800 to \$5,000;

In Columbus County 30 schools were improved and \$50 was raised for pictures;

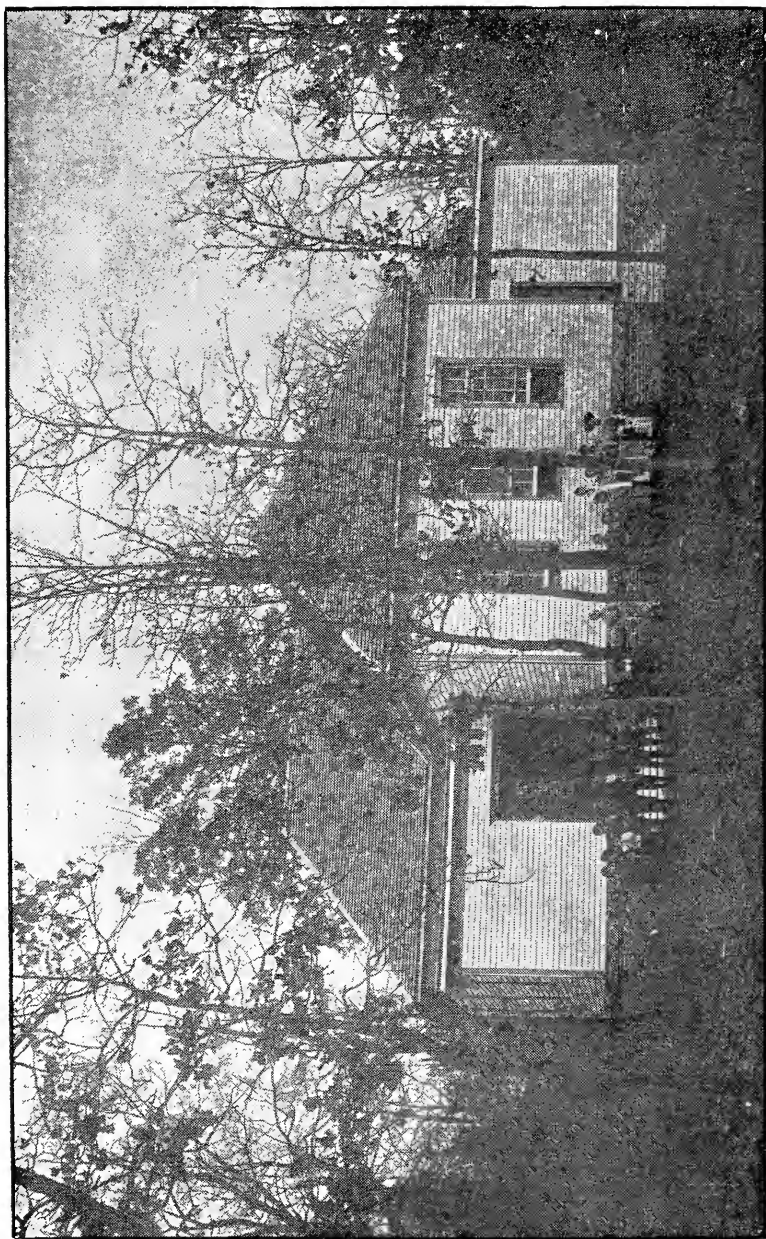
In Cumberland County every rural public school was reached, and \$75 raised for pictures, books, etc.;

In Dare County a large number of pictures were hung, \$50 spent for various items of improvements and \$150 for libraries;

In Greene County 23 schools were improved, \$115 raised for general work and \$50 for libraries.

In Henderson County every woman teacher in the county was a member of the association, every school in the county was improved, and \$60 raised for libraries;

In Madison County \$11.45 was raised for pictures, \$55 for libraries and \$250 for other improvements;



GROOME, GUILFORD COUNTY (NEW).

In Rockingham County 72 schools were reached, \$50 raised for pictures, \$165 for libraries, and \$25 for other improvements; 12 libraries were established and 500 pictures hung;

In Surry County every school was reached, 23 new houses were built, increasing the valuation of the school property in these districts from \$1,200 to \$5,750;

In Wayne County 43 schools were reached, \$75 spent for pictures, 206 framed pictures hung, \$464 raised for libraries and 41 libraries established, and \$120 raised for other improvements.

Throughout the State the increase in the valuation of school property through the influence of the association was \$48,600. This does not include the very many times greater increase at the expense of the State and counties that may be traced directly to the influence of the Woman's Betterment Association. It should also be remembered that in every county in which a dollar was raised by private subscription for libraries up to \$60, the county and State each added \$60.

But the dollar-mark cannot indicate the amazing amount of good that the association has done in increasing public interest, in bringing home to the people the fact that the school-house is a public institution for the condition of which every individual in the district is responsible, and in the development of community effort as distinguished from the "raw individualism" which has heretofore characterized the life of the South.



WILLIAMSBURG, ROCKINGHAM COUNTY (OLD).



WILLIAMSBURG, ROCKINGHAM COUNTY (NEW).

"AT THAT HOUR CAME THE DISCIPLES UNTO JESUS, SAYING, WHO, THEN, IS GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN? AND HE CALLED A LITTLE CHILD AND SET HIM IN THE MIDST OF THEM."

"IT IS NOT THE WILL OF YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN THAT ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES SHOULD PERISH."

"VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN, YOU HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME."

"IT UNDOUBTEDLY APPEARS CHEAPER TO NEGLECT THE AGED, THE FEEBLE, THE INFIRM, THE DEFECTIVE, TO FORGET THE CHILDREN OF THIS GENERATION; BUT THE MAN WHO DOES IT IS CURSED OF GOD, AND THE STATE THAT PERMITS IT IS CERTAIN OF DESTRUCTION. THERE ARE PEOPLE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH WHO TAKE NO CARE OF THE WEAK AND INFIRM, WHO CARE NAUGHT FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND PROVIDE ONLY FOR THE GRATIFICATION OF THEIR OWN DESIRES; BUT THESE PEOPLE NEITHER WEAR CLOTHES NOR DWELL IN HOUSES. THEY LEAVE GOD OUT OF CONSIDERATION IN THEIR ESTIMATE OF LIFE, AND ARE KNOWN TO US AS SAVAGES."—*Charles B. Aycock.*

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